

DEVELOP CREATIVE NEW USES FOR VACANT LAND



City of St. Louis Sustainability



Future site of Bistro Box, a winner in the 2013 Sustainable Land Lab Competition

DESCRIPTION

Like many other post-industrial cities, vacant land is abundant in the City of St. Louis and it seeks to foster the creative reuse of City owned vacant land. Neighborhoods can brainstorm creative new uses for vacant property or pull from existing ideas generated by design competitions and projects such as the Sustainable LandLab Competition or the Sustainable Neighborhood Small Grant Competition. Use these resources and other tools at hand to create an exciting new place that contributes to your neighborhood in sustainable ways.

NEIGHBORHOOD BENEFITS

Environmental

- Cleaner soil, water, and air, which contributes healthy food, a better habitat for urban animals, and improved plant diversity, tree canopy, and more

Social

- Reduced crime and increased safety with more occupied & activated lots
- Improved sense of place and ownership in the community
- Added cultural or recreational amenities
- Opportunities for training, research, and learning in various practices for local residents

Economic

- Reduced City dollars spent on maintenance and upkeep
- Occupied and maintained lots increase surrounding property values
- Additional jobs, volunteer opportunities, and learning experiences



Teen workers at Sweet Sensations, an entrepreneurial bee-keeping project on vacant land in The Greater Ville



Proposal for Cherokee Street Community Garden

RELATED TOOLS

When paired with other tools, utilizing vacant property can contribute to a greater and more holistic, sustainable neighborhood. Think about community cohesion, public art, local prosperity, public safety, and healthy vibrant communities. Try combining your creative idea with:

- Foster Activity with Public Seating, Programs, and Furniture
- Establish a Community Garden or Local Food Installation
- Create Public Art Installations or Exhibits

EXAMPLES

Sunflower+ Project: StL, Old North, St. Louis, MO

Sunflowers improve aesthetics, remediate soil, and create a sellable product.

PXSTL Design Competition, St. Louis, MO

Temporary, community-focused project called Freecell to be implemented across from the Pulitzer Foundation.

Sweet Sensations, The Greater Ville, St. Louis, MO

Teaching youth small business and entrepreneurship skills with beekeeping.



Site of the future Mighty Mississippians project in Old North St. Louis

GET STARTED

- 1. Research** St. Louis is a national leader in the creative use of vacant land. Visit and research the various competitions and projects that have been successful on vacant land in the past. Some existing competitions, projects, and ideas can be found here:
 - [Sustainable Land Lab Competition](#)
 - [Sustainable Neighborhood Small Grant Competition](#)
 - [PXSTL](#)
 - [Urban Land Institute](#)
 - [Open/Closed St. Louis](#)
 - [2013 Olin Sustainability Case Competition](#)
 - [Pruitt Igoe Now](#)
 - [Rally STL](#)
 - [Mind the Gap \(Detroit\)](#)
 - [Candy Chang](#)
 - [Spontaneous Interventions](#)
- 2. Find a Site** Determine what vacant lot in your neighborhood is best suited to a creative reuse and its owner. If it is owned by the [St. Louis LRA](#), follow the steps outlined to acquire the property. Detailed instructions about that process can be found [here](#).
- 3. Create a Proposal** To acquire vacant property, you must typically have a project proposal and a letter of support from your alderman. Create a proposal for your design idea with drawings, a video, a poster, a website, or some other form of communication to express your ideas. Some examples can be taken from recent projects.
- 4. Fund** Once you have a vacant lot idea and supporting drawings, there are a number of ways to try to get funding for your project:
 - Submit it to one of the competitions hosted by the City or another organization, such as the [Sustainable Land Lab Competition](#) or the [Sustainable Neighborhood Small Grant Competition](#). You can check the [City of St. Louis Sustainability Office](#), www.stlouis-mo.gov/sustainability, for information about new and ongoing competitions or funding opportunities.
 - Approach your neighborhood association about how to apply for grant funds or CDBG funding.
 - Approach non-profits for help in writing grants or other fund-raising strategies.
 - Approach local churches or other community institutions about fund-raising, donations, or sponsorship for your project.
- 5. Implement** To generate ideas for vacant lots in your neighborhood you can host your own competition, public meeting, or workshop to get input from neighbors, organizations, artists, and other groups. This can be focused around one vacant lot or building or to get input on various lots. Often a workshop or charrette - an intensive brainstorming session - is the best and most fun way to get community members to participate and generate ideas. Look at some common [charrette guidelines](#) and work with existing organizations to create a big and exciting event. Invite business owners, residents, youth, school groups, and more.



Fruit trees at Botanical Heights Community Garden

RELATED SUSTAINABILITY PLAN CATEGORIES

This tool supports the following goals and strategies:

Urban Character, Vitality & Ecology

Strategies: C1-Design public spaces and neighborhood streets as gathering spaces for people; B7-Encourage communities to improve their own neighborhood; H6-Maintain appearance of vacant land and abandoned properties.

Art, Culture & Entertainment

Strategies: E4-Use temporary public art projects and programs to revitalize underused City areas; E7-Encourage collaborations that build places and destinations through art; G6-Develop partnerships to find new venues for artists and creative industries.

Health, Well-Being & Safety

Strategies: A5-Plan and design buildings, spaces, and environments for safety; Include activity options, program opportunities and cultural attributes in greenways and public spaces.